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Cottell: "The more I defend myself, the more vicious the opposition becomes."

Col. Cottell, Master Spy?

Even if He Wasn't, His Tales Are Big on the Lecture Circuit

By Mark Hosenball
Special to The Washington Post

As a self-proclaimed British master spy, his real-life exploits may owe more to Walter Mitty than James Bond.

But, "Colonel" John Edward Cottell, MVO, MC, MBE, was a hot attraction on the chicken-salad circuit, enthralling lecture audiences with tales of patriotism and valor drawn from his career as a British agent in the 1940s and 1950s.

For the past four years, the tall, dapper Englishman with a carefully trimmed military mustache across his stiff upper lip appeared before more than 300 Rotary Club luncheons, ladies' socials and literary league soirees in parlors from Richmond to Houston, garnering rave reviews and fees of \$2,500 a lecture.

Cottell claims to have been an intimate of former British prime minister Winston

Churchill and such illustrated British spies as Greville Wynne (who was imprisoned by the Soviet KGB) and Maurice Oldfield (late director of MI-6 and alleged model for John le Carré's Smiley).

Moreover, he says his own exploits have inspired more than one noted spy novel, including le Carré's "The Spy Who Came in From the Cold" (Cottell purports to be the model for Alec Leamas, the main character) and the same author's later masterpiece, "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy," in which, Cottell says, he is Jim Prideaux, the British agent whose capture in Eastern Europe touches off Smiley's epic mole hunt.

Cottell's stirring story, which ends with a flourish of anti-communist and pro-Reagan rhetoric, has received standing ovations from paying customers across Rotary Club America. But his performances have attracted less than rave reviews from his for-

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